

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 564

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 143

SEPTEMBER 18, 1973

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: HEATH-COSGRAVE MEETING

1. REACTION HERE IN BELFAST TO HEATH-COSGRAVE MEETING HAS SO FAR BEEN SPARSE AND SOMEWHAT TENTATIVE. BREVITY AND NONSPECIFICITY OF COMMUNIQUE MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS. BUT LATENESS OF HOUR OF TERMINATION OF TALKS AND OF SUCCESSIVE PRESS CONFERENCES ALSO RELEVANT. LATER FACTOR UNDOUBTEDLY ACCOUNTS FOR LACK OF EARLY COMMENT ON HEATH'S STATEMENT IN A BBC INTERVIEW THAT HE "WOULD FAVOR THE TOTAL INTEGRATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND WITH GREAT BRITAIN IF THE PROPOSED EXECUTIVE IS NOT SET UP BY MARCH, AS REQUIRED BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTION. THIS WOULD BE THE WISH OF THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN, AND DIRECT RULE, WHICH WAS REGARDED AS A TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT FOR A YEAR OR 18 MONTHS COULD NOT BE CONTINUED."

2. UNIONIST LEADER FAULKNER CALLED COMMUNIQUE "DISAPPOINTING" FOR NOT DEALING WITH TWO POINTS MOST VITAL TO NORTHERN MAJORITY: EXTRADITION AND RECOGNITION BY SOUTH OF CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF NI. "IF THE TWO PREMIERS TALKED FOR NINE HOURS AND ONLY

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COVERED WHAT IS MENTIONED IN THE COMMUNIQUE, MR. HEATH'S TRIP

WAS HARDLY WORTHWHILE", FAULKNER ADDED. HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH HEATH'S STICKING BY HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENTS TO EFFECT THAT FORMATION OF EXECUTIVE IN NI IS ESSENTIAL "BEFORE YOU CAN GET ANY QUESTION OF A COUNCIL OF IRELAND ITS GO TO BE A COUNCIL BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT IN BELFAST AND THE GOVERNMENT IN DUBLIN, EQUALLY REPRESENTED."

3. ALLIANCE PARTY SPOKESMAN OLIVER NAPIER WELCOMED SENSE OF URGENCY HEATH-COSGRAVE MEETING HAD INJECTED INTO NI POLITICAL SITUATION. GOVERNMENTS IN LONDON AND DUBLIN AND, ABOVE ALL, PEOPLE OF NI ARE CRYING OUT FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TO GET ON WITH TASK OF "SETTING UP AND WORKING INSTITUTIONS WHICH CAN HELP TO HEAL THE DIVISIONS IN THE COMMUNITY". NAPIER ALSO WELCOMED HEATH'S ASSURANCE WHAT WHILE ABNORMAL SITUATION OBTAINS IN NI, SECURITY WILL CONTINUE TO BE CONTROLLED FROM WESTMINISTER.

4. SDLP HEADQUARTERS SOURCE, POINTING OUT THAT PARTY LEADERS HAD BEEN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH GOI FOR PAST WEEKS AND WILL BE AGAIN SOON, SAID DEFINITIVE SDLP REACTION TO HEATH-COSGRAVE MEETING WILL EMERGE AFTER MEETING OF ASSEMBLY PARTY SEPTEMBER 19. PRELIMINARY REACTION SEEMS, HOWEVER, TO BE ONE OF CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION THAT 22 EVENTS ARE MOVING ALONG AS WE HAD HOPED THEY WOULD."

5. UNIONIST NEWS LETTERS LEAD EDITORIAL MADE TWO COMMENTS: A, IT NOTED WITH REGRET AND DISMAY, THAT "GREATEST ATTENTION OF TALKS WAS BEING PAID TO A COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND NOT TO THE PRIORITY OF ENDING THE CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE". AND B, IT APLAUDED THE PRIME MINISTERS MAKING IT CLEAR THAT THERE COULD BE NO COUNCIL OF IRELAND UNTIL AN EXECUTIVE HAD BEEN FORMED IN NORTHERN IRELAND TOOK SATISFACTION FROM REPORTED DISAPPOINTMENT OF COSGRAVE ON THIS MATTER.

6. NATIONALIST-MINDED IRISH NEWS SAW MEETING AS HOPEFUL STEP, BUT NOT A NEW DEPARTURE, IN LONG ROAD TO NATIONAL UNITY OF IRISH PEOPLE. LEAD EDITORIAL QUOTED CARSON, SAINT OF UNIONISM, TO REASSURE FEARFUL NORTHERN MAJORITY THAT COUNCIL OF IRELAND IS STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION: "YOU KNOW THAT IN THIS ISLAND WE CANNOT LIVE ALWAYS SEPARATED FROM ONE ANOTHER. WE ARE TOO UNCLASSIFIED

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SMALL TO BE APART OR THE BORDER TO BE THERE FOR ALL TIME. THE CHANGE WILL NOT BY IN MY TIME, BUT IT WILL COME."

7. COMMENT: GIVEN ANODYNE COMMENTS IN POST-MEETING NEWS CONFERENCES AS WELL AS GENERALITY OF COMMUNIQUE, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT HEATH'S ITERATION-IF-NO-EXECUTIVE COMMENT TO BBC SEEMS TO HAVE CAUSED GREATEST STIR HERE. SOME SEE IT AS WARNING TO SDLP TO MAKE SURE EXECUTIVE WORKS IF IT WANTS

COUNCIL-OF-IRELAND DEVELOPMENTS. OTHERS SAW IT AS WARNING TO
ULTRA-LOYALISTS, MANY OF WHOM WERE FOR INTEGRATION BUT HAVE
SINCE COOLED TO IDEA, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE TOTAL INTEGRATION MEANS
END OF ASCENDANCY. LORD ONEILL OPINED THAT COMMENT WERE MERELY
INTENDED TO GET POLITICIANS CRACKING. WHATEVER WAS INTENDED,
MANY ARE BOUND TO BE CRITICAL ON GROUND THAT THE COMMENT
WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE MAJORITY EXTREMISTS TO TRY WRECK ASSEMBLY-
EXECUTIVE SYSTEM.
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